

Why you should be your own CEO

By Melody A. Kramer, published on NAFLP blog August 9, 2009

It seems that corporate America continues to be run by people who are just as sexist and out-of-touch as those who argued that women should not be allowed to vote, who seem to think that women cannot both raise children and be successful in business.

As reported in the Wall Street Journal, in a June 28th speech at the Society for Human Resource Management's annual conference, former General Electric Co. Chief Executive Jack Welch asserted that women had to choose between taking time off to raise children and reaching the corner office. "There's no such thing as work-life balance," he said. "There are work-life choices, and you make them, and they have consequences."

Do they ever!

Out of curiosity, I did a little research on Jack Welch and his publicly documented choices and consequences. It isn't pretty, from his three marriages (and two divorces) to heart attacks and bypass surgeries.

Just three years after being named Fortune magazine's "Toughest Boss in America," he divorced his first wife of 28 years and mother of his four children. Years later he "admit[ted] that he wasn't always there" for his four children. ["New Wife, New Life," People, April 18, 2005.](#)

Really? Such a candid admission. Choices . . . consequences.

Shortly after his first divorce he married wife number two – Jane Beasley - a lawyer. Thirteen years later, he was facing a nasty, high-profile divorce after he was caught in an affair with Suzy Wetlaufer, the Harvard Business Review editor more than 20 years his junior, who had interviewed Welch for a story. Disclosures in the divorce proceeding regarding the full extent of Jack Welch's lavish lifestyle and perks, all compliments of GE, were so serious as to force Welch to offer to give up most of them, and prompted an SEC investigation.

Choices . . . consequences.

Welch's widely-quoted basic philosophy – your job should be so exciting that your personal life becomes a less compelling draw.

With that kind of leadership from the top of our largest corporations, is it little wonder that we have unacceptably high rates of divorce, suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction, and depression among professionals?

You can choose to be absent from your children's life. You can choose to ignore your spouse. You can choose to ignore your health. You can choose to be led by corporate leaders who don't give a _____ [you fill in the word] about you, your family, your health, or anything other than corporate profits. Or you can see if you are fit to be a better CEO than that.

Choices . . . consequences.